

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A method for conducting electronic commerce, comprising:
 - electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a preselected comparison shopping site (CompShop), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;
 - running, by the preselected comparison shopping site, a query on a plurality of electronic stores carrying the item, and asking for a price of the item, the plurality of electronic stores including at least one smartStore;
 - determining by the at least one smartStore that the query is received from the preselected comparison shopping site; and
 - selectively determining, by the smartStore, an offer price of the item and selectively returning one of a static price and a modified price,

wherein the modified price and selectively returning, by the smartStore, of said one of the static price and the modified price result from the smartStore learning a best offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from the plurality of electronic stores.
2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - returning a standard price by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores determined not to be the smartStore.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - sending, by the smartStore, a request to the preselected comparison shopping site asking for comparative prices of the item; and
 - determining, by the smartStore, whether an asking offer price is the best offer price that can be offered, wherein if the asking offer price is determined to be a lowest price, then the smartStore returns its static price.
4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - if the asking offer price is determined not to be a lowest price, then adjusting, by the smartStore, the price; and
 - returning a new price to the preselected comparison shopping site.
5. (Previously presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one of the electronic stores automatically changes the price depending on the customer for the item asking for the price and what the lowest price is as recorded by the preselected comparison shopping site.
6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - maintaining, by the smartStore, a list of preselected comparison shopping sites.
7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising:

if a request is made from other than the list of preselected comparison shopping sites, then returning by the smartStore, the static price; and

if the request for the price is from the list of preselected comparisons shopping sites, then submitting by the smartStore a request to the preselected comparison shopping site to get a list of all comparison prices for the item.

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 7, further comprising:
when the smartStore obtains the list of all comparison prices, determining whether the smartStore can offer a lowest price.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the smartStore determines whether it can afford to offer the lowest price based upon the list of all comparison prices and its own cost price and required profit margin.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising:
if the smartStore can offer the lowest price, then returning the lowest price to the preselected comparison shopping site.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising:
if the smartStore cannot offer the lowest price, then returning its static price to the preselected comparison shopping site.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
returning, by the preselected comparison shopping site, a list of prices to the customer.
13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
selecting, by the customer, based upon prices received, a choice of one of the plurality of electronic stores for providing the item.
14. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the item comprises a product.
15. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the item comprises a service.
16. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the best offer price is a lowest offer price.
17. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the best offer price is a highest offer price.
18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

caching, by the preselected comparison shopping site, prices received from the plurality of electronic stores.

19. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
caching, by the smartStore, a list of prices received from the preselected comparison shopping site.
20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the smartStore selectively visits the preselected comparison shopping site, such that information from the preselected comparison shopping site is cached by the smartStore for a comparison with a price request occurring between visits to the preselected comparison shopping site.
21. (Previously presented). The method of claim 1, wherein a price comparison is performed on an identical item and a substantially identical item, and
wherein a graded price is offered on the substantially identical item.
22. (Currently amended) A system for conducting electronic commerce between a customer and one of a plurality of electronic stores, comprising:
a plurality of electronic stores;
a preselected comparison shopping site coupled to the plurality of electronic stores and a customer interested in purchasing an item,

wherein at least one of the plurality of electronic stores comprises a smartStore that recognizes that a source of a query is from the preselected comparison shopping site and not from a non-comparison shopping site; and

an electronic medium for linking the customer, each of the plurality of electronic stores, and the preselected comparison shopping site together electronically,

wherein the preselected comparison shopping site runs the query on the plurality of electronic stores and requests an offer price of the item,

wherein the smartStore determines a predetermined offer price of the item from the plurality of electronic stores and selectively returns one of a static price and a modified price, said one of the static price and the modified price result selectively returned being based on the smartStore recognizing that the query is from the preselected comparison shopping site and learning a lowest offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from all of the plurality of electronic stores.

23. (Previously presented) A system for performing electronic commerce, comprising:

a preselected comparison shopping site (CompShop);

means for electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, the preselected comparison shopping site, and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;

means for running, by the preselected comparison shopping site, a query on a plurality of electronic stores, asking for a price of the item; and

means for determining, by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected comparison shopping site, an offer price of the item and returning one of a static price and a modified price, the modified price resulting from the at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes a query from the preselected comparison shopping site learning a lowest offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from the plurality of electronic stores,

wherein the means for determining and returning returns said one of the static price and the modified price based on the learned lowest offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from the plurality of electronic stores.

24. (Previously presented) A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of conducting electronic commerce, the method comprising:

electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a preselected comparison shopping site (CompShop), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;

running, by the preselected comparison shopping site, a query on a plurality of electronic stores asking for a price of the item; and

determining, by at least one of the plurality of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected comparison shopping site, an offer price of the item and returning one of a static price and a modified price, the modified price resulting from the at least one of the plurality

of electronic stores that recognizes the query from the preselected comparison shopping site learning a lowest offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from the plurality of electronic stores,

wherein said returning said one of the static price and the modified price is based on the learned lowest offer price received by the preselected comparison shopping site from the plurality of electronic stores.